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THE BURLINGTON TIMES NEWS (N. C.)
6 February 1980

The Public Forum

The CIA replies

Editor:

I have just seen your editorial of January 7, "The CIA: Why Are We So Surprised?"

Providing your readers with editorial judgments which they trust and believe is an awesome responsibility. To provide such judgments based on false information without any attempt to verify your facts is faulty journalism at best.

You reported that "no one knows how much it costs to operate this intelligence agency," and that "it is likely that this agency never has to justify its budget requests." You surmised that CIA operates "behind a cloak without public, or even governmental, scrutiny. Someone needs to force a look at this agency and determine just what it is doing and how much it is costing to do whatever is being done."

Where have you been?

In January of 1978 President Carter signed Executive Order 12036, "United States Intelligence Activities" which spells out in great detail what the CIA can and cannot do. Nearly three years ago the President created the Intelligence Oversight Board (IOB) whose only mission is to look over and into the activities of this country's intelligence apparatus. Both Houses

of Congress have created committees for precisely the same purpose—The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (May 19, 1976) and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (July 24, 1977). Both committees are now working on Charter Legislation to provide laws to direct and limit our intelligence activities.

The CIA is subject to the same rigorous budget process as other government organizations. Its budget is carefully scrutinized by the Office of Management and Budget and by the President before it is forwarded to Congress for additional in-depth inspection by four Committees of Congress. Programs are challenged and justified at every turn, as they should be.

I urge you next time to check the facts before you launch into an editorial trade. My office is here to help you in that regard. Your readers deserve the whole truth.

Those in the CIA who work for the citizens of the United States in a thankless and often dangerous profession are deeply hurt by your uninformed allegations.

HERBERT E. HETU
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